

## OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK

Fiscal Year 2008

The Town Clerk's office prepared for and conducted two elections in FY08: the Presidential Primary on February 5, 2008, and the Annual Town Election on April 1, 2008.

Two special town meetings were held on November 5, 2007 and November 28, 2007. The November 5, 2007 special town meeting, known as the Fall Town Meeting, was held over five sessions and twenty articles were considered and voted on.

The Annual Town Meeting which began on April 28, 2008, with a full compliment of town meeting members, lasted for ten sessions and deliberated on forty-seven articles. Amongst other business, town meeting members voted to rescind the Recombinant DNA Bylaw, and adopted three new general bylaws: False Alarm Fees, Right to Farm, and the Nuisance House. An attempt to gather the required number of signatures to call a referendum on the town meeting vote to adopt the Nuisance House bylaw failed.

At the beginning of the fifth session held on May 14, 2008 the Moderator announced that this Annual Meeting, heretofore designated the Two Hundred Forty-Ninth would henceforth be recognized as the Two Hundred Fiftieth. Research by Elizabeth Sharpe, President of the Amherst Historical Society, has established that Amherst's first Annual Meeting as an independent district was held on March 19, 1759 with Ebenezer Dickinson as moderator; this Meeting, 249 years later, is therefore the Two Hundred Fiftieth Annual Meeting.

The Moderator offered the following for town meeting's information:

*Among other business, the 1759 meeting:*

- *Elected officers, including selectmen, treasurer, constables, surveyors, tything men, fence viewers, hog reeves.*
- *Voted that "hogs rung & Yoakt According to Law may run at Large".*
- *Voted to "Hire Six Bulls for the District Service this Year".*
- *Voted "the Select men to Hire said Bulls".*
- *Set the salary for the minister at 66 pounds plus 15 pounds for firewood.*
- *Raised 20 pounds for schooling for the year.*

*Amherst continued to call itself a district until 1776 when, for the first time, the minutes refer to the Town of Amherst. According to Planning Director Jonathan Tucker, recognition as a Town was not officially granted by the Commonwealth until 1788.*

On July 9, the Town of Amherst lost one of its most beloved residents, and the Town Clerk's office lost one of its most valuable Election Wardens, with the passing of Rose Quinton. During the 1980s Rose took on some duties in the town clerk's office and even served as the Acting Town Clerk for a time. Later she became the Warden at Precinct 9 where she served up until the 2008 Annual Town Election. Rose shared with me how disappointed she was when the date for the Presidential Primary was brought forward to February 5, because she would not be back from her winter retreat and would not be able to work. She was most displeased that she would have to vote an absentee ballot. Rose passed away just days before her 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday. We love you Rose and we will miss you.

Visitors to Town Hall are no longer met with pieces of paper stuck to the main entrance doors notifying them of the location for meetings. The Town Clerk's office now operates and maintains the Electronic Bulletin Boards which display the upcoming meetings for the week as well as the room location for meetings being held in Town Hall.

In the summer of 2007 the Town Clerk's office began overhauling its vital records indexing system. Vital record indexes are an inventory of all the records in the custody of the Town Clerk. These indices are vital to the location of records when dates of birth, death, or marriage are unknown to individuals requesting certified copies and other data. Completion of this project will allow for more efficient location of records, less costly maintenance, and most exciting, more space in the Town Clerk vault.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sandra J. Burgess CMC  
Town Clerk

### **BOARD OF REGISTRARS**

Barbara Fenton's term on the Board of Registrars expired on June 30, 2008. Barbara served as a member of the Board of Registrars since her appointment on July 11, 2005. Barbara replaced Doris Holden and was an active member of the Board of Registrars, especially on election night when she approached her tasks with great enthusiasm.

Registration sessions were held 20 days prior to each election in accordance with Chapter 51, §§26 and 28 of the Massachusetts General Laws. The Town Clerk's office was open from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. to facilitate voter registration.

The Secretary of State announced that the Presidential Primary, previously scheduled for March 4, 2008, would be held on February 5, 2008. By the time this announcement was made it was already beyond the optimum date for processing requests for absentee ballots; the decision, in general, created many challenges for the city and town clerks across the state. The Secretary of State filed special legislation allowing the state to reimburse cities and towns for mailing absentee ballots to military personnel and voters who were out of the country by priority mail. Special legislation also provided for ballots being mailed from outside the United States to be counted if received up until 10 days after the election provided they had been mailed on or before the date of the election. Statute normally provides for absentee ballots mailed from overseas to be counted only when received up ten days following a state election.

Accelerating the date of the Presidential Primary presented all city and town clerk's offices with a challenge which was met with the diligence Massachusetts voters have come to expect from their election officials. High voter turnout for the Presidential Primary indicates record voter turnout in the Presidential Election to be held on November 4, 2008.

On December 6, 2007, Aaron Buford, on behalf of the Student Government Association, petitioned the Select Board for the dissolution of the four campus voting sub-precincts. The Select Board voted unanimously at a meeting held on December 10, 2007 to reverse the vote taken at the December 19, 2005 Select Board meeting at which the sub-precincts were established under Chapter 54, § 7A of the

Massachusetts General Laws. All voters affected by this change were notified of their change of polling location in accordance with Chapter 54, § 7A.

Voter totals as of April 1, 2008 were as follows:

<b>Pct.</b>	<b>AI</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>GP</b>	<b>GR</b>	<b>Int</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>RC</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>WF</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1</b>		680	1	19		11			82	1	707		<b>1501</b>
<b>2</b>		856	2	9		4			89		538		<b>1498</b>
<b>3</b>		495		12		6			72		494		<b>1079</b>
<b>4</b>	1	552	1	3		8			73		439		<b>1077</b>
<b>5</b>	2	719		17		5			97		654	1	<b>1495</b>
<b>6</b>		1081		21	1	10	2		137		857		<b>2109</b>
<b>7</b>		976		19	1	13		2	113		813	1	<b>1938</b>
<b>8</b>		1362		30		10			178	1	923		<b>2504</b>
<b>9</b>		976		32		9			117	2	903	1	<b>2040</b>
<b>10</b>	1	542		5		3			48	1	488		<b>1088</b>
	<b>4</b>	<b>8239</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1006</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6816</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16329</b>

*AI = American Independent*

*GR = Green Rainbow*

*RC = Rainbow Coalition*

*S = Socialist*

*D = Democrat*

*Int = Interdependent 3<sup>rd</sup> Party*

*Ref – Reform*

*U = Unenrolled*

*GP = Green Party USA*

*L = Libertarian*

*R = Republican*

*WF = Working Families*

1,687 voters were registered and 1,173 voters were deleted between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra J. Burgess, CMC

Clerk to the Board of Registrars

## 2007 Vitals

(The Town Clerk is required to report  
to the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics  
on a calendar-year basis)

**Births            173**

**Deaths            164**

**Marriages        136**

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## RESULTS

### **SPECIAL TOWN MEETING November 5, 7, 15, 19, and 28, 2007**

The meeting was televised by Amherst Community Television and shown on the Government Channel.

The Special Town Meeting was called to order by the Moderator, Harrison Gregg at 7:39 p.m. There were 251 town meeting members. 126 checked in and a quorum was declared. The call and the return of the warrant were read by Assistant Town Clerk, Susan Audette.

Peter Gray-Mullen was sworn in as Town Meeting Member.

#### ARTICLE 1. Reports of Boards and Committees (Select Board)

**VOTED unanimously** to hear those reports of Town officers, the Finance Committee, and any other Town boards or committees which are not available in written form.

Action taken on 11/5/07

#### ARTICLE 2. Transfer of Funds – Unpaid Bills (Finance Committee)

**DISMISSED:** [To see if the Town will, in accordance with Chapter 44, Section 64, of the Massachusetts General Laws, appropriate and transfer a sum of money to pay unpaid bills of previous years.]

Action taken on 11/5/07

#### ARTICLE 3. FY08 Budget Amendments (Finance Committee)

**A.        VOTED unanimously** to amend the budget voted under Article 17 of the 2007 Annual Town Meeting (Fiscal Year 2008 Operating Budget), by appropriating to the Health Claims Trust Fund \$562,207 for employee health insurance and to meet such appropriation transfer \$562,207 from Free Cash in the Undesignated Fund Balance of the General Fund, said appropriation to be reimbursed to the General Fund via a temporary health insurance premium surcharge to employers and employees until such time as the total appropriation has been reimbursed.

**B.        VOTED unanimously** to appropriate and transfer \$31,323 from Free Cash in the Undesignated Fund Balance of the General Fund for the Hampshire County Regional Lock-up Facility assessment.

Action taken on 11/5/07

#### ARTICLE 4. Property Tax Exemptions for Veterans' Organizations (Select Board)